

THE ART OF DREAMING

Don Juan, the crafty Yaqui sorcerer, has gone through "the crack between the worlds." But he's still playing tricks on his eager pupil, Carlos. In a new Castaneda adventure (here adapted from his latest book), Carlos has found new mentors—all women, among them the "marvelous warrior" La Gorda. Castaneda's women both menace and mother him. They also teach him the amazing feats of the dreamer.

BY CARLOS CASTANEDA

In the final scene of Carlos Castaneda's fourth book, Tales of Power (1974), his two sorcery teachers, Don Juan and Don Genaro, say a poignant farewell to their apprentices and vanish into the darkness of the unknown. Carlos then grasps the arm of another apprentice, Pablito, and they jump from the edge of the mesa into an abyss.

His new book, The Second Ring of Power (to be published in January by Simon & Schuster), opens two years later with Carlos returning to Mexico to try to understand the meaning of his leap. His apprenticeship is over—or so he thinks—and he is now addressed as the Nagual, as was Don Juan, in recognition of his spiritual powers. But it quickly becomes clear that Carlos still has lessons to learn, contradictions to resolve, fears to conquer. Before he can really claim his powers, he must pass further tests—designed by Don Juan himself.

From December 1960 to June 1973 I was an apprentice of sorcery. Two old Mexican Indians were my sorcery teachers: Don Juan Matus, a Yaqui from Sonora, and Don Genaro Flores, a Mazatec from Oaxaca. During that same period I was also a student of anthropology at the University of California, Los Angeles. These two disciplines, sorcery and anthropology, were a most propitious combination for me, despite the hardships proper to each of them; hardships which forced me, at various times, to withdraw from them, vowing never to return. My fate, nonetheless, was that I complete my training in both.

The product of my dual enterprise has been the publication of a four-volume report on learning sorcery. In that report I have struggled to maintain myself as a truthful student of both disciplines. I have defined truthfulness, in my role as a student of anthropology, as the effort to relate with fidelity everything that took place, neither inventing nor distorting anything. I did not go to the field to prove or disprove preconceived hypotheses.

The manner in which Don Juan and

Don Genaro conducted their instruction made it blatantly evident from the start that it would be impossible for me to understand their premises unless I took the only alternative available, that of becoming a sorcerer myself. To be a truthful student of sorcery entailed, therefore, that I become an apprentice.

Don Juan Matus defined the fundamental premise of his sorcery in the following statement: "The world, as we perceive it, is a description which is given to us from the moment we are born and which we learn to visualize and take for granted." The purpose of my apprenticeship, in concordance with this premise, was to acquaint me with an alternative description.

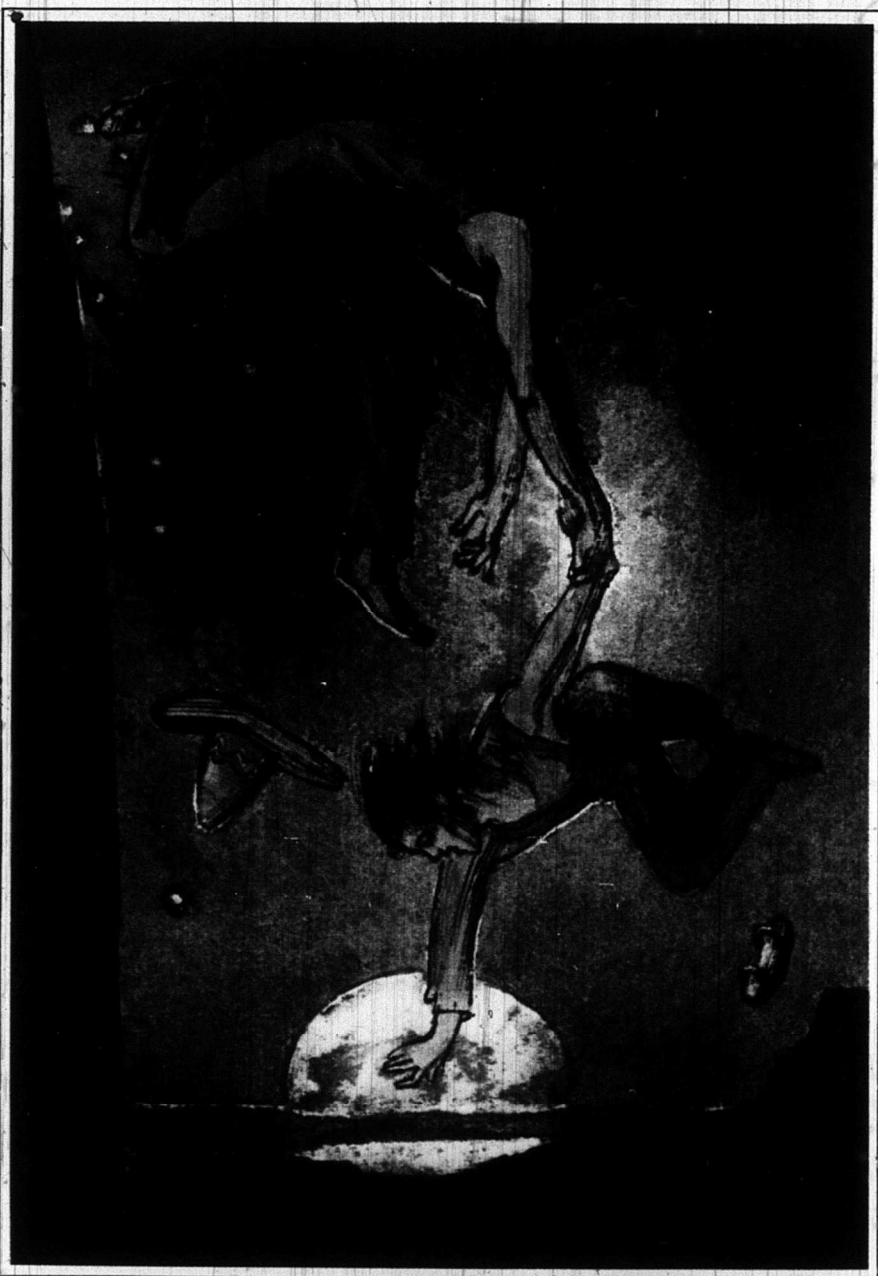
Don Juan delineated the theme of the concluding phase of his teachings in this manner: "We need only a small portion of the totality of ourselves to fulfill the most complex tasks of life. Yet when we die we die with the totality of ourselves. A sorcerer asks the question, 'If we're going to die with the totality of ourselves why not, then, live with that totality?'"

What Don Juan meant by the "totality of ourselves" is the complex perception of what he considered to be the two inherent realms of the universe: the tonal and the nagual. The tonal pertains to the order or structure that we experience and produce as living organisms, and also to the order of all existing matter. The nagual pertains to the sustaining force or principle that originates that order; the unseen source of all there is.

The main issue that confronted Don Juan and Don Genaro as teachers, throughout all the years of my apprenticeship, was to explain, demonstrate, and corroborate the configurations of meaning and practice which in their view led to the totality of oneself.

Once I had corroborated with my body the concept of one's totality, my apprenticeship was terminated. A

At right, Carlos gets lessons in dreaming from the little sisters. "We were spinning, tumbling, swaying like a giant, weightless leaf."



Carlos and another apprentice, Pablito, fall into the canyon. "I perceived my body disintegrating.... It was as if I were watching myself explode. I was actually a cluster of my selves."

farewell meeting was staged on the flat top of a barren mountain on the western slopes of the Sierra Madre in central Mexico, for myself and two other apprentices, Pablito and Nestor. From what I had understood it was to be Pablito's last meeting with the two old sorcerers as well. Our apprenticeships had come to their final moment. The solemnity and the scope of what took place there left no doubt in my mind that I was indeed seeing them for the last time. Towards the end of that session we all said good-bye and then Pablito and I jumped together from the top of the mountain into a deep canyon.

For two years I had examined and ana-

lyzed, in the most thorough and careful manner, my feelings, perceptions, and interpretations of that jump, and yet after all that time the only thing that was constant were my fears; I had come to the point that I could not rationally believe that it had actually happened. But another part of me held on steadfast to the notion that it did happen, that I did jump. That part of me was, seemingly, outside the realm of my reason, and it comprised my perceptions, or rather the memory of what I had perceived, during and after that jump.

Upon jumping, I perceived my body disintegrating. I went through a

barrage of dissociated images and lights. It was as if I were looking at the animated walls of a tunnel from a speeding car. The images and the lights finally made me explode. It was a lingering bursting, like the slow dispersion of fireworks in the sky. It was as if I were watching myself explode and yet I was within the explosion itself. Whatever I was going through was something which did not allow me to have unity. I was in a million pieces, but not in a figurative sense. I was actually a cluster of my selves. I could not think or feel in the coherent unifying sense that I ordinarily do, and yet I somehow thought and felt.

Don Juan had always insisted that words were inadequate to portray that state. Since I have known only the world described with words, I found his statement preposterous. My idea was that one can adequately characterize anything. If words are insufficient, one can connote, circumvent meanings, use analogies. Now I know he was right. One can describe in one way or another anything that takes place in the realm of the tonal, the world of our daily use, but what takes place outside that realm, as in the case of sorcerers' perceptions of the nagual, is indescribable....

From there I went through another tunnel-like ride and emerged into the realm of order, the tonal. That explosion was the opposite of the first one. I burst into unity. I was whole. My perceiving had coherence, and I could direct my sensors. What was more important, I could evaluate what I was perceiving.

After experiencing a time of coherent perception I plummeted again into another state of disintegration; and from there I went back into another facet of unified perception. I continued through 17 bounces between the tonal and the nagual. Every time I went into the disintegrative facet I renewed my strength, and the subsequent visions of order I experienced became more and more engulfing. Their compelling force was so intense, their vividness so real, and their complexity so vast that I have not been capable of explaining them.

Don Juan and Don Genaro are no longer available and their absence has created in me a most pressing need, the need to make headway in the midst of apparently insoluble contradictions.

I went back to see Pablito and Nestor to seek their help in resolving those contradictions. But what I encountered during my visit to them cannot be described in any other way except as a

final assault on my reason, a concentrated attack designed by Don Juan himself. His apprentices, under his absentee direction, in a most methodical and precise fashion, demolished in five days the last bastion of my reason. In those five days they revealed to me one of the two pragmatic aspects of their sorcery, the art of dreaming.

Carlos goes to the house of Pablito, to see if he will confirm that they really jumped into the abyss. Pablito's mother, Doña Soledad, tries to seduce and kill him, announcing to the surprised Carlos that Don Juan ordered her to do it. Four other women then enter Carlos' life in short order. The "little sisters," Lidia, Josefina, and Rosa, are mischievous young girls who like to scare Carlos and trick him. Their leader is La Gorda, a dark woman with broad shoulders and long, jet-black hair, who looks over Carlos with a "calmness and force" reminiscent of Don Juan.

With the aid of La Gorda, Carlos survives an assault by "the allies," who are really enemies—an oblong blob, a phosphorescent coyote, and a glowing man. Afterwards, Carlos learns that two days before meeting La Gorda, she had been searching for him in "the city," at the same time as he was looking for Don Juan there. He had sensed her presence, as "the being closest to Don Juan in temperament," but they had missed each other. La Gorda explains she was acting on orders to take Carlos away—but she is not sure to where. For his part, Carlos has grave doubts about going away, which he views as a final leave-taking from the world of the tonal.

But confronted with La Gorda's determination to find me and go away with me, I realized that if she had found me in the city that day, I would never have returned to my home, never again would I have seen those I held dear. I had not been prepared for that. I had braced myself for dying, but not for disappearing for the rest of my life in full awareness, without anger or disappointment, leaving behind the best of my feelings.

I was almost embarrassed to tell La Gorda that I was not a warrior worthy of having the kind of power that must be needed to perform an act of that nature: to leave for good and to know where to go and what to do.

"We are human creatures," she said. "Who knows what's waiting for us, or what kind of power we may have?"

I told her that my sadness in leaving like that was too great. The changes that sorcerers went through were too drastic and too final. I recounted to her what Pablito had told me about his unbearable sadness at having lost his mother.

"The human form feeds itself on those feelings," she said dryly. "I pitied myself and my little children for years. I couldn't understand how the Nagual could be so cruel to ask me to do what I did: to leave my children, to destroy them, and to forget them."

"We hold the images of the world with our attention," explained La Gorda. "If I don't focus attention on the world, the world collapses."

She said that it took her years to understand that the Nagual also had had to choose to leave the human form. He was not being cruel. He simply did not have any more human feelings. To him, everything was equal. He had accepted his fate. The problem with Pablito, and myself, for that matter, was that neither of us had accepted his fate.

"Let's forget this," La Gorda said suddenly. "Let's talk about what we have to do tonight."

"What exactly are we going to do tonight, Gorda?"

"We have our last appointment with power."

"Is it another dreadful battle with somebody?"

"No. The little sisters are simply going to show you something that will complete your visit here. The Nagual told me that after that you may go away and never return, or that you may choose to stay with us. Either way, what they have to show is their art. The art of the dreamer.

"I've told you already what the Nagual told me about attention," she said. "We hold the images of the world with our attention. A male sorcerer is very difficult to train because his attention is always closed, focused on something. A female, on the other hand, is always open, because most of the time

she is not focusing her attention on anything. Especially during her menstrual period. The Nagual told me and then showed me that during that time I could actually let my attention go from the images of the world. If I don't focus my attention on the world, the world collapses."

I wanted to hear more about it, but she stopped talking and hurriedly sat very close to me. She signaled me with her hand to listen. I heard a faint swishing sound and suddenly Lidia stepped out into the kitchen. She had changed the Western clothes she had been wearing the last time I had seen her and had put on a long dress like the Indian women of the area wore. She had a shawl on her shoulders and was barefoot. Her long dress, instead of making her look older and heavier, made her look like a child clad in an older woman's clothes.

She sat down at the end of the table to the right of me. I did not know whether or not to start up a conversation. I was about to say something when La Gorda tapped my leg with her knee, and with a subtle movement of her eyebrows signaled me to listen. I heard again the muffled sound of a long dress as it touched the floor. Josefina stood for a moment at the door before walking toward the table. I could not keep a straight face with her. She was also wearing a long dress, a shawl, and no shoes, but in her case the dress was three or four sizes larger and she had put a thick padding into it. Her face was lean and young, but her body looked grotesquely bloated.

She took a bench and placed it at the left end of the table and sat down. All three of them looked extremely serious. They were sitting with their legs pressed together and their backs very straight.

I heard once more the rustle of a dress and Rosa came out. She was dressed just like the others and was also barefoot. Her greeting was formal, and everyone answered her in the same formal tone. She sat across the table facing me. All of us remained in absolute silence for quite a while.

La Gorda spoke suddenly, and the sound of her voice made everyone else jump. She said, pointing to me, that the Nagual was going to show them his allies, and that he was going to use his special call to bring them into the room.

I tried to make a joke and said that the Nagual was not there, so he could not
(Continued on page 118)

Art of Dreaming (Continued from page 38)

bring any allies. I thought they were going to laugh. La Gorda covered her face and the little sisters glared at me. La Gorda put her hand on my mouth and whispered in my ear that it was absolutely necessary that I refrain from saying idiotic things. She looked right into my eyes and said that I had to call the allies by making the moths' call.

I reluctantly began. But no sooner had I started than the spirit of the occasion took over and I found that in a matter of seconds I had given my maximum concentration to producing the sound. I modulated its outflow and controlled the air being expelled from my lungs in order to produce the longest possible tapping. It sounded very melodious.

I took an enormous gasp of air to start a new series. I stopped immediately. Something outside the house was answering my call. The tapping sounds came from all around the house, even from the roof. The little sisters stood up and huddled like frightened children around La Gorda and myself. "Please, Nagual, don't bring anything into the house," Lidia pleaded with me.

After a few moments the hysteria and fear of those three girls mounted to enormous proportions. La Gorda leaned over and whispered that I should make the opposite sound, the sound that would disperse them. I had a moment of supreme uncertainty. I began my whistling and the pressure in my umbilical region ceased. La Gorda smiled and sighed with relief and the little sisters moved away from my side, giggling as if all of it had been merely a joke.

I looked at La Gorda for directions. She was sitting with a very straight back. Her eyes were half-closed, fixed on Rosa. The little sisters were laughing very loudly, like nervous schoolgirls. Lidia pushed Josefina and sent her tumbling over the bench to fall next to Rosa on the floor. The instant Josefina was on the floor their laughter stopped. Rosa and Josefina shook their bodies, making an incomprehensible movement with their buttocks; they moved them from side to side as if they were grinding something against the floor. Then they sprang up like two silent jaguars and took Lidia by the arms. All three of them, without making the slightest noise, spun around a couple of times. Rosa and Josefina lifted Lidia by the armpits and carried her as they tiptoed two or three times around the table. Then all three of them collapsed as if

they had springs on their knees that had contracted at the same time. Their long dresses puffed, giving them the appearance of huge balls.

La Gorda, who had been quietly sitting next to me watching them, suddenly stood up and with the agility of an acrobat ran toward the door of their room at the corner of the dining area. Before she reached the door she tumbled on her right side and shoulder just enough to turn over once, then stood up, pulled by the momentum of her rolling, and flung open the door. She

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performed all her movements with absolute quietness.

The three girls rolled and crawled into the room like giant pill bugs. La Gorda signaled me to come over to where she was; we entered the room and she had me sit on the floor with my back against the frame of the door. She sat to my right with her back also against the frame. She made me interlock my fingers and then placed my hands over my bellybutton.

I was at first forced to divide my attention between La Gorda, the little sisters, and the room. But once La Gorda had arranged my sitting position, my attention was taken up by the room. The three girls were lying in the middle of a large, white, square room with a brick floor. There were four gasoline lanterns, one on each wall, placed on built-in supporting ledges approximately six feet above the ground. The room had no ceiling. The supporting beams of the roof had been darkened and that gave the effect of an enormous room with no top.

La Gorda stood up, closed the door behind us, and secured it with an iron bar. She made me slide over a few inches, without changing my position, until I was sitting with my back against the door. Then she silently rolled the length of the room and sat down underneath the lantern on the south wall; her get-

ting into that sitting position seemed to be the cue.

Lidia stood up and began to walk on the tips of her toes along the edges of the room, close to the walls. It was not a walk proper but rather a soundless sliding. As she increased her speed, she began to move as if she were gliding, stepping on the angle between the floor and the walls. She would jump over Rosa, Josefina, La Gorda, and myself every time she got to where we were sitting. I felt her long dress brushing me every time she went by. The faster she ran, the higher she got on the wall. A moment came when Lidia was actually running silently around the four walls of the room, seven or eight feet above the floor. The sight of her, running perpendicularly to the walls, was so unearthly that it bordered on the grotesque.

She had captured my attentiveness at a level I could not imagine. The strain of giving her my undivided attention was so great that I began to get stomach convulsions; I felt her running with my stomach. My eyes were getting out of focus. With the last bit of my remaining concentration, I saw Lidia walk down on the east wall diagonally and come to a halt in the middle of the room.

After some minutes of stillness, long enough for Lidia to recover her strength and sit up straight, Rosa stood up and ran without making a sound to the center of the room, turned on her heels, and ran back to where she had been sitting. Her running allowed her to gain the necessary momentum to make an outlandish jump. She leaped up in the air, like a basketball player, along the vertical span of the wall, and her hands went beyond the height of the wall, which was perhaps 10 feet. I saw her body actually hitting the wall, although there was no corresponding crashing sound. I expected her to rebound to the floor with the force of the impact, but she remained hanging there, attached to the wall like a pendulum. Suddenly she let go. She fell down from a height of 15 or 16 feet. Her long dress flowed upward and gathered around her head.

A moment later, Josefina quietly moved to the center of the room. She paced back and forth with noiseless steps, between where Lidia was sitting and her own spot at the west wall. She faced me all the time. Suddenly, as she approached her spot, she raised her left forearm and placed it right in front of her face, as if she wanted to block me from her view. She lowered it and raised

it again, this time hiding her entire face. She repeated the movement countless times, as she paced soundlessly from one side of the room to the other. Every time Josefina raised her forearm a bigger portion of her body disappeared from my view.

Once she had hidden her entire body, all I was able to make out was a silhouette of a forearm suspended in mid-air, bouncing from one side of the room to the other, and at one point I could hardly see the arm itself.

It took a long time to get back my physical balance. My clothes were soaked in perspiration. I was not the only one affected. All of them were exhausted and drenched in sweat. La Gorda was the most poised, but her control seemed to be on the verge of collapsing.

The little sisters were looking at me fixedly. I saw out of the corner of my eye that La Gorda's eyes were half-closed. She rolled noiselessly to my side and whispered in my ear that I should begin to make my moth call, keeping it up until the allies had rushed into the house and were about to take us.

I put my left hand to my lips and tried to produce the tapping sound. I found it very difficult at first. My lips were dry and my hands were sweaty, but after an initial clumsiness, a feeling of vigor and well-being came over me. I produced the most flawless tapping noise I had ever done. As soon as I stopped to breathe, I could hear the tapping sound being answered from all directions.

La Gorda suddenly rushed to me, lifted me up bodily by my armpits and pushed me to the middle of the room. Her action disrupted my absolute concentration. I noticed that Lidia was holding on to my right arm, Josefina to my left, and Rosa had backed up against the front of me and was holding me by the waist with her arms extended backward. La Gorda was in back of me. She ordered me to put my arms behind and grab on to her shawl, which she looped around her neck and shoulders like a harness.

I noticed at that moment that something besides us was there in the room, but I could not tell what it was. The little sisters were shivering. I knew that they were aware of something which I was unable to distinguish. All of a sudden, I felt the wind pulling us. I grabbed on to La Gorda's shawl with all my strength, while the little sisters grabbed on to me. I felt that we were spinning, tumbling, and swaying from side to side

like a giant, weightless leaf.

I opened my eyes and saw that we were like a bundle. We were either standing up or we were lying horizontally in the air. I could not tell which because I had no sensorial point of reference. Then, as suddenly as we had been lifted off, we were dropped. I sensed our falling in my midsection. I yelled with pain and my screams were united with those of the little sisters. The insides of my knees hurt.

My next impression was that something was getting inside my nose. It was

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very dark and I was lying on my back. I sat up. I realized then that La Gorda was tickling my nostrils with a twig.

I did not feel exhausted or even mildly tired. I jumped to my feet and only then was I stricken by the realization that we were not in the house. We were on a hill, a rocky, barren hill. I took a step and nearly fell down. After a few minutes, all of us were standing. We were perhaps half a mile east of the house.

Back in the house, La Gorda sat facing me and the little sisters sat around her. I was facing all four of them.

"Tonight was a special night for you," she said. "Tonight all of us pitched in to help you, including the allies. The Nagual would have liked it. Tonight you saw all the way through."

"I did?" I asked.

"You mean you didn't see how they were holding on to the lines of the world?" she asked.

"No, I didn't."

"You didn't see them slipping through the crack between the worlds?"

I narrated to them what I had witnessed. They listened in silence. At the end of my account La Gorda seemed to be on the verge of tears.

"It's our fate that you are plugged up like this," she said. "But you're still the Nagual to us. I won't hinder you with

ugly thoughts. You can at least be assured of that."

I knew that she meant it. She was speaking to me from a level that I had witnessed only in Don Juan. She had repeatedly explained her mood as the product of having lost her human form; she was indeed a formless warrior. A wave of profound affection for her enveloped me. I was about to weep.

It was at the instant that I felt she was a most marvelous warrior that quite an intriguing thing happened to me. The closest way of describing it would be to say that I felt that my ears had suddenly popped. Except that I felt the popping in the middle of my body, right below my navel, more acutely than in my ears. Right after the popping everything became clearer: sounds, sights, odors. Then I felt an intense buzzing, which oddly enough did not interfere with my hearing capacity; the buzzing was loud but did not drown out any other sounds. It was as if I were hearing the buzzing with some part of me other than my ears. A hot flash went through my body. And then I suddenly recalled something I had never seen. It was as if an alien memory had taken possession of me.

I remembered Lidia pulling herself from two horizontal, reddish ropes as she walked on the wall. She was not really walking; she was actually gliding on a thick bundle of lines that she held with her feet. I remembered seeing her panting with her mouth open, from the exertion of pulling the reddish ropes. The reason I could not hold my balance at the end of her display was because I was seeing her as a light that went around the room so fast that it made me dizzy; it pulled me from the area around my navel.

I remembered Rosa's actions and Josefina's as well. Rosa had actually brachiated, with her left arm holding on to long, vertical, reddish fibers that looked like vines dropping from the dark roof. With her right arm she was also holding some vertical fibers that seemed to give her stability. She also held on to the same fibers with her toes. Toward the end of her display, she was like a phosphorescence on the roof. The lines of her body had been erased.

Josefina was hiding herself behind some lines that seemed to come out of the floor. What she was doing with her raised forearm was moving the lines together to give them the necessary width to conceal her bulk. Her puffed-up clothes were a great prop; they had somehow contracted her luminosity.

The clothes were bulky only for the eye that looked. At the end of her display Josefina, like Lidia and Rosa, was just a patch of light. I could switch from one recollection to the other in my mind.

When I told them about my concurrent memories the little sisters looked at me bewildered. La Gorda was the only one who seemed to be following what was happening to me. She laughed with true delight and said that the Nagual was right in saying that I was too lazy to remember what I had "seen"; therefore, I only bothered with what I had looked at. I told La Gorda that some part of me knew that I had found then a transcendental key. A missing piece had been handed down to me by all of them. But it was difficult to discern what it was.

She announced that she had just "seen" that I had practiced a good deal of "dreaming," and that I had developed my attention, and yet I was fooled by my own appearance of not knowing anything.

"The Nagual told us to show you that with our attention we can hold the images of the world," La Gorda said. "The art of the dreamer is the art of attention."

Thoughts came down on me like a landslide. I had to stand up and walk around the kitchen. I sat down again. We remained quiet for a long time. I knew what she had meant when she said that the art of dreamers was the art of attention. I knew then that Don Juan had told me and showed me everything he could. I had not been able, however, to realize the premises of his knowledge in my body while he was around. He had said that my reason was the demon that kept me chained, and that I had to vanquish it if I wanted to achieve the realization of his teachings. The issue, therefore, had been how to vanquish my reason. It had never occurred to me to press him for a definition of what he meant by reason. I presumed all along that he meant the capacity for comprehending, inferring, or thinking, in an orderly, rational way. From what La Gorda had said, I knew that to him reason meant attention.

Don Juan said that the core of our being was the act of perceiving, and that the magic of our being was the act of awareness. For him perception and awareness were a single, functional, inextricable unit, a unit which had two domains. The first one was the "attention of the tonal." Don Juan also called

this form of attention our "first ring of power," and described it as our awesome but taken-for-granted ability to impart order to our perception of our daily world.

The second domain was the "attention of the nagual"; that is to say, the capacity of sorcerers to place their awareness on the nonordinary world. He called this domain of attention the "second ring of power," or the altogether portentous ability that all of us have, but only sorcerers use, to impart order to the nonordinary world.

"Our 'second ring of power' remains hidden for the immense majority of us, and only at the moment of death is it revealed to us."

La Gorda and the little sisters, in demonstrating to me that the art of dreamers was to hold the images of their dreams with their attention, had brought in the pragmatic aspect of Don Juan's scheme. They were the practitioners who had gone beyond the theoretical aspect of his teachings. In order to give me a demonstration of that art, they had to make use of their "second ring of power," or the "attention of the nagual." In order for me to witness their art, I had to do the same. In fact, it was evident that I had placed my attention on both domains. Perhaps all of us are continually perceiving in both fashions but choose to isolate one for recollection and discard the other, or perhaps we file it away, as I myself had done. Under certain conditions of stress or acquiescence, the censored memory surfaces and we can then have two distinct memories of one event.

"The Nagual told us that practice is what counts," La Gorda said suddenly. "Once you get your attention on the images of your dream, your attention is hooked for good."

I felt compelled to ask them my usual question: I had to know their procedures, how they held the images of their dreams.

"You know that as well as we do," La

Gorda said. "The only thing I can say is that after going to the same dream over and over, we began to feel the lines of the world. They helped us to do what you saw us doing."

Don Juan had said that our "first ring of power" is engaged very early in our lives and that we live under the impression that that is all there is to us. Our "second ring of power," the "attention of the nagual," remains hidden for the immense majority of us, and only at the moment of our death is it revealed to us. There is a pathway to reach it, however, which is available to every one of us, but which only sorcerers take, and that pathway is through "dreaming." "Dreaming" was in essence the transformation of ordinary dreams into affairs involving volition. Dreamers, by engaging their "attention of the nagual" and focusing it on the items and events of their ordinary dreams, change those dreams into "dreaming."

"Don Genaro was in his body of dreaming most of the time," La Gorda said. "He liked it better. That's why he could do the weirdest things and scare you half to death. Genaro could go in and out of the crack between the worlds like you and I can go in and out a door."

Don Juan had also talked to me at great length about the crack between the worlds. I had always believed that he was talking in a metaphorical sense about a subtle division between the world that the average man perceives and the world that sorcerers perceive.

La Gorda and the little sisters had shown me that the crack between the worlds was more than a metaphor.

It was the capacity to change levels of attention. One part of me understood La Gorda perfectly, while another part of me was more frightened than ever.

"You have been asking where the Nagual and Genaro went," La Gorda said. "... The truth is that the Nagual and Genaro went through that crack."

For some reason, undefinable to me, her statements plunged me into profound chaos. I had felt all along that they had left for good. I knew that they had not left in an ordinary sense, but I had kept that feeling in the realm of a metaphor. Although I had even voiced it to close friends, I think I never really believed it myself. In the depths of me I had always been a rational man. But La Gorda and the little sisters had turned my obscure metaphors into real possibilities. La Gorda had actually transported us half a mile with the energy of her "dreaming."